AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

11 (Currently amended). A tool comprising

a first functional instrument including a first handle having a viewing window ~~first marker~~, and

a second functional instrument including a second handle having a surface and a ~~second~~ marker that is essentially flush with the surface and fits into the viewing window,

the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a composite instrument,

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

the marker being visible within the viewing window ~~first and second markers being located in a pre-determined visual alignment~~ when the composite handle is formed, and

at least one of the first handle and second handle being comprised of material that indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument has been heat sterilized.

12 (Previously amended). A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument has been heat sterilized comprises a deformation of at least a portion of the material.

13 (Currently amended). A tool according to claim 12, wherein the deformation prevents location of the ~~first and second~~ markers within the viewing window ~~in the pre-determined visual alignment~~.

14 (Currently amended). A tool comprising

a first functional instrument including a first handle having a viewing window ~~first marker~~, and

a second functional instrument including a second handle having a surface and a ~~second marker~~ that is essentially flush with the surface and fits into the viewing window,

the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a composite instrument,

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

the marker being visible within the viewing window ~~first and second markers being located in a pre-determined visual alignment~~ when the composite handle is formed, and

at least one of the first handle and second handle being comprised of material that indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument has been sterilized by least one of radiation and sterilization chemicals.

15 (Original). A tool according to claim 14, wherein the material changes colors when exposed to at least one of radiation and sterilization chemicals.

16 (Previously amended). A method of accessing bone which utilizes the tool of claim 11.

17 (Original). A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication comprises a color change in at least a portion of the material.

18 (Original). A tool according to claim 12, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle.

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19 (Original). A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication comprises a change in the physical composition of the material.

20 (Original). A tool according to claim 12, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first functional instrument does not completely engage the second functional instrument to form the composite instrument.

21 (Original). A tool according to claim 14, wherein the indication comprises a change in the physical composition of the material.

22 (Currently amended). A tool comprising

a first instrument including a first handle having a viewing window ~~first marker~~, and

a second instrument including a second handle having a surface and a ~~second~~ marker that is essentially flush with the surface and fits into the viewing window,

the first handle mating with the second handle to form a composite handle,

the marker being visible within the viewing window ~~first and second markers being located in a pre-determined visual alignment~~ when the composite handle is formed, and

at least one of the first handle and second handle comprising material that indicates whether at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized.

23 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using heat.

24 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using steam.

25 (Original). The tool of Claim 23, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized in an autoclave.

26 (Original). The tool of Claim 23, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using superheated steam.

27 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using a gas.

28 (Original). The tool of Claim 27, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using a vaporized liquid.

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29 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using radiation.

30 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using chemicals.

31 (Original). The tool of Claim 30, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using ethylene-oxide.

32 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material changes color in response to sterilization.

33 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material deforms in response to sterilization.

34 (Currently amended). A tool according to claim 33, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle, preventing location of the ~~first and second~~ markers within in the viewing window ~~pre-determined visual alignment~~.

35 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the first or second instrument deforms in response to sterilization.

36 (Currently amended). A tool according to claim 35, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the first or second instrument, the first instrument does not

completely engage the second instrument to form the composite instrument, preventing location of the ~~first and second~~ markers within in the viewing window ~~pre-determined visual alignment~~.

37 (Currently amended). A tool according to claim 35, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the first or second instrument, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle, preventing location of the ~~first and second~~ markers within in the viewing window ~~pre-determined visual alignment~~.

38 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material changes physical composition in response to sterilization.

39 (Original). The tool of Claim 32, wherein at least a portion of the material changes color during the sterilization process.

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40 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material comprises a chemically sensitive pigment.

41 (Original). The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material comprises Lustran™ material.

42 (Original). The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a gas.

43 (Original). The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a vaporized liquid.

44 (Original). The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using ethylene-oxide.

45 (Original). The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a radiation source.